United Nations A/AC.183/SR.324

General Assembly

Distr.: General
9 July 2010

Original: English

Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People

Summary record of the 324th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 9 June 2010, at 10.30 a.m.

Chair: Mr. Badji ..... (Senegal)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.45 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

1. *The agenda was adopted.*

Update on developments since the previous meeting of the Committee

2. **The Chair** said that at a meeting of the League of Arab States Follow-up Committee on the Arab Peace Initiative held in Cairo on 1 May 2010, Arab foreign ministers had given their support to indirect discussions between Israel and the Palestinians, which would be brokered by the United States of America. On 8 May 2010, the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization had agreed to talks with the Government of Israel.

3. On 9 May 2010, after a meeting between the President of the Palestinian Authority, Mahmoud Abbas, and the United States Special Envoy for Middle East Peace, George Mitchell, the Palestinian chief negotiator, Saeb Erekat had stated that proximity talks had begun. That development had met with widespread international support.

4. On 18 May 2010, the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Robert Serry, had briefed the Security Council on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question.

5. On 25 and 26 May 2010 in Istanbul, the Committee had convened the United Nations International Meeting in Support of the Israeli-Palestinian Peace Process. The meeting had been followed on 27 May 2010 by the United Nations Public Forum in Support of the Palestinian People.

6. In the early hours of 31 May 2010, Israeli navy vessels had assaulted and intercepted six ships of the Free Gaza Movement, a coalition of civil society organizations and activists attempting to deliver a wide range of humanitarian goods to Gaza. Nine Turkish nationals had been killed and many more wounded. Israel had detained and subsequently deported over 600 volunteers on the ships. The violent raid had been widely condemned by the international community.

7. At an emergency meeting of the Security Council on 31 May 2010, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Turkey, Ahmet Davutoğlu, had stated that he was distraught at the actions of the Israel Defense Forces, which he had described as a grave breach of international law. The President of the Security Counc had made a statement on behalf of the Counc (S/PRST/2010/9) condemning Israel's attack, requestin the immediate release of all ships and civilians held b Israel and calling for an impartial investigation of th attack. It had urged Israel to permit full consular acces allow the countries concerned to retrieve their decease and wounded immediately, and ensure the delivery c humanitarian assistance from the convoy to Gaza. Th Secretary-General and the United Nations Specia Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process ha condemned the violence.

8. On 1 June 2010, the Human Rights Council ha adopted resolution 14/1 condemning in the stronges terms the Israeli attack on the aid flotilla, calling o Israel to immediately release those detained, an deciding to dispatch an independent international fact finding mission to investigate violations o international law resulting from the Israeli attacks.

9. The President of the Palestinian Authority wa currently meeting the President of the United States i the White House.

The situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and developments in the political process

10. **Mr. Mansour** (Observer for Palestine) said tha Israel's actions had continued to create a negativ climate. The Palestinian Authority and the League o Arab States Follow-up Committee had many reservations regarding the proposed proximity talks, a they doubted whether the Government of Israel woul undertake meaningful efforts to advance the peac process. Nevertheless, they had agreed to attemp proximity talks for a period of four months. They ha done so largely in response to positive signals from th President of the United States of America. The talk were not yet under way in earnest. The obstacles to th process, including the separation wall and th belligerent activities of settlers, remained in place.

11. Israel's attack on the aid flotilla furthe complicated the picture. The Palestinian Authority, th Arab States, the Non-Aligned Movement and almost al members of the Security Council had condemned tha act of aggression. The recent presidential statement ha called for a credible investigation and for the blockad against Gaza to be lifted. The investigation should tak place under the auspices of the United Nations, with o

without Israel's cooperation. Member States had a collective responsibility to encourage the Secretary-General to proceed on those terms.

12. There were growing signs that the situation in Gaza could no longer be tolerated. Security Council resolution 1860 (2009) and the recent presidential statement contained all of the elements necessary for the blockade to be lifted and for humanitarian and construction supplies to be delivered. Land crossings between Israel and Gaza should be opened. An agreement should be reached to allow exports from Gaza to the outside world, thereby reviving the area's economy. United Nations agencies, and in particular the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), continued to fulfil a valuable role in assisting the people of Gaza.

13. The geopolitical unity of the Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, must be maintained in order to preserve the dream of an independent, contiguous and viable Palestinian State. He hoped that the Committee would support efforts at reconciliation between the Palestinian Authority and its brothers in Hamas. Independence could not be achieved if the division between Palestinians became permanent.

14. The Palestinian delegation cu ently in Washington, D.C., would continue to do its utmost to enable successful proximity talks to take place within the following four months. An understanding should be reached that the borders of the Palestinian State must be those of 4 June 1967. Such an understanding would pave the way for negotiation on all permanent-status issues, including Jerusalem, refugees, settlements, security and water. It was crucial to achieve substantial results in the immediate future. The United States Government, through the good offices of the United States Special Envoy for Middle East Peace, should find practical ways to ensure that Israel changed its behaviour and acted in good faith. The United States Government should show leadership in articulating a vision of how the conflict could be resolved.

15. The statement of the Quartet issued in Moscow on 19 March 2010, and that issued by the Council of the European Union on 8 December 2009, showed that the international community endorsed the plan of the Prime Minister of the Palestinian Authority, Salam Fayyad, to rebuild the infrastructure of the Palestinian State. That process would allow the Palestinian nation to assert its existence, end the occupation, achieve statehood and become a member of international organizations.

16. **Mr. Peck** (former United States Ambassador) said that as long as Israel could count on the unremitting support of the United States, it was unlikely to change its policies. To speak of a peace process and negotiations made no sense because there was no actual war going on and the parties to the negotiations were not on an equal footing. What existed in Palestine was an occupation, not a war, and there could be no genuine negotiations between the occupier and the occupied.

17. He had been invited by the Free Palestine Movement in San Francisco to participate in the Gaza flotilla. When Israeli commandos had boarded his boat at 4 a.m., it was true that, as Israel had claimed, they had been armed with paintball guns. However, those paintball guns had been strapped on top of machine guns. They used one of the paintball guns on the other American on his boat, who happened to be a survivor of the attack carried out by Israel on the United States navy vessel the USS Liberty during the June 1967 war, making him the only American to have been attacked twice in the Mediterranean by the Israeli Navy.

18. His group had been taken to Ashdod, where he had been asked to sign a document in Hebrew, a language which he could not read, and had been put on an airplane to New Jersey. Israel's claim that Israeli commandos had been attacked by passengers on the *Mavi Marmara*, where the killing took place, was preposterous. Those passengers had merely been defending their vessel from an attack in international waters which, had it happened anywhere else, would have been labelled piracy.

19. As a patriotic American who had served in the United States army and diplomatic corps, he was disturbed by the appearance of his country's complicity in Israel's illegal activities. As a Jew, he did not wish harm to anyone in Israel; but he feared that bad things would continue to happen as long as unstinting support from the United States meant that Israel had no incentive to alter its policies. No one country in a region could have security unless all did. Some Israeli Prime Ministers themselves, including Shimon Peres, Ehud Olmert and Ehud Barak, had stated that, in the absence of a two-State solution, Israel would become a State that was either apartheid or no longer Jewish. He

hoped that bodies such as the Committee could succeed in finding a reasonable, non-hostile path to the peaceful outcome that was desired by all.

20. **Mr. Daou** (Mali) said that the only reasonable outcome would be a lasting and fair solution in accordance with United Nations resolutions. He called for an international investigation of the incident, an end to the blockade, and the resumption of negotiations.

21. **Mr. Dizdar** (Turkey) said that the situation in Gaza had been discussed at length at the United Nations International Meeting in Support of the Israeli-Palestinian Peace Process held in Istanbul just days before the flotilla incident. His country had accepted the Secretary-General's proposal for an international investigation of the incident, but Israel had not yet responded. If there was going to be a national investigation, it should be conducted not by Israel but by Turkey, since the incident had taken place in the open sea on a Turkish vessel and the victims had been Turkish. Autopsies done in Turkey had determined that the bodies of the nine victims contained a total of 30 bullets, some shot from very close range, and that one victim had been shot in the head five times. The incident was a symptom of a deeper problem that needed to be addressed by the international community.

22. **Mr. Berrah** (Algeria) said that the presence of a member of civil society underscored the connection between the work of the Committee and that of non-State actors. It also demonstrated that the Committee's concerns were shared by elements of civil society in the United States. It was, however, clear that much of the public in the United States heard only one side of the story. Moreover, Israel had acted in the belief that it could count on the good will of the United States. He therefore wondered what civil society could do to draw the attention of the United States Government to the issues at hand.

23. **Mr. Valero Briceño** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that it was unusual on such an occasion to hear a soldier speak from the heart about peace. Certain parties might be tempted to respond in kind to Israel's terrorist actions, something that would only serve the interests of Israel and the United States. However, the President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Hugo Chávez Frías, had stressed that there could be no justice without peace. The entire world, and in particular the peoples of the South, must come together in a spirit of unity to build an army of peace.

24. **Ms. Rubiales de Chamorro** (Nicaragua) said that the facts of Israel's raid were fundamentally clear. Israel's policies would remain unchanged so long as it felt able to act with impunity. She hoped that any investigation into those events would not suffer the same fate as the report of the United Nations Fact-Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict.

25. She was somewhat concerned at talk of a search for solutions. A solution already existed: it consisted in the implementation of the relevant United Nations resolutions, which called for the establishment of two States living side by side in peace. It was essential that as many States as possible should recognize the existence of the Palestinian State and assert that principle in the Security Council and other forums.

26. **Mr. Crowley** (South Africa) said that his Government condemned Israel's unjustifiable military action in the strongest terms and had recalled its ambassador to Israel for consultations. The siege of Gaza was unconscionable and unsustainable.

27. He welcomed the presence of a member of civil society; the experience of South Africa showed that individuals could make their voices heard. He asked whether Mr. Peck believed that Israel was now a strategic liability to the United States.

28. **Ms. Hernández Toledano** (Cuba) said that her country condemned the recent brutal attack in the strongest possible terms, called for a credible and impartial investigation, and insisted that Israel must lift the blockade on Gaza. She wished to know why Israel felt able to act as it did, and what measures could be taken to resolve the situation.

29. **Mr. Gocken** (Observer for the Organization of the Islamic Conference) said that he was grateful to Mr. Peck for his courageous actions. The Organization of the Islamic Conference stood prepared to assist the Committee in its work.

30. **Mr. Saripudin** (Indonesia) said that the aid flotilla had included 12 Indonesian nationals, of whom two had been seriously injured. His Government condemned those inhuman attacks. He wondered what could be done to make it clear that the time had come for a peaceful solution.

31. **Mr. Peck** (former United States Ambassador) said that he appreciated the diplomatic restraint with which the Committee members had expressed their criticism of his country's foreign policy. He stressed that Israel's behaviour could not be changed by either the threat of war or international condemnation. History showed that Israel was unconcerned about its international image and believed that an iron-fisted policy was the best way to achieve its objectives. The only way to change that policy was to make its cost clear to Israel. It was possible that an economic boycott of the type applied to the former South African regime could have some influence. Until an effective way of pressuring Israel was found, apartheid would continue there.

Report on the United Nations International Meeting in Support of the Israeli-Palestinian Peace Process and the United Nations Public Forum in Support of the Palestinian People, Istanbul, 25 to 27 May 2010

32. **Mr. Tanin** (Afghanistan) said that the United Nations International Meeting in Support of the Israeli Palestinian Peace Process held in Istanbul on 25 and 26 May 2010 had been well attended by representatives of Governments, international organizations and civil society organizations, including a delegation from the Committee. Participants had cautiously welcomed the proximity talks being mediated by the United States. The importance of lessons learned from previous peace efforts was stressed. Negotiations needed to be conducted on the basis of equality between the parties, guided by principles based on international law, and mindful of the wider regional dimensions of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It was important for there to be precise mechanisms for the implementation and monitoring of any agreements reached.

33. Jerusalem was the common heritage of all humanity and Israel's actions with regard to that city's holy places were completely unacceptable. There had been no tangible improvement in the humanitarian, economic and social situation in Gaza. Participants in the Meeting had commended the efforts of Turkish civil society organizations to implement projects in the West Bank and to break the Gaza blockade. They had also stressed the importance of the two-year State-building plan put forward by Prime Minister Fayyad, and called on the international community to be ready to recognize the State of Palestine based on the 1967 borders, including through a United Nations Security Council resolution, once statehood had been declared by the Palestinian Authority at the appropriate time.

34. The United Nations Public Forum in Support of the Palestinian People had been held on 27 May 2010 at Istanbul Kultur University under the theme "Jerusalem: the key to Israeli-Palestinian peace". It had called on civil society to mobilize to end Israel's repressive policies in that city. Information about the events in Istanbul was available on the recently redesigned "Question of Palestine" website and a report on the meetings would be published by the Division for Palestinian Rights.

35. *The Committee took note of the Report on the United Nations International Meeting in Support of the Israeli Palestinian Peace Process and the United Nations Public Forum in Support of the Palestinian People, Istanbul, 25 to 27 May 2010.*

United Nations African Meeting on the Question of Palestine, Rabat, 1 and 2 July 2010 (Working Paper No. 6)

36. **The Chair** said that the objective of the United Nations African Meeting on the Question of Palestine, scheduled to be held in Rabat on 1 and 2 July 2010 was to promote broad international support, including by African States, for a solution to the conflict based on a shared vision of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security. The meeting would consider the question of Jerusalem in the context of the permanent-status negotiations. Invitations had been sent to United Nations Member States and observers, relevant United Nations bodies and other intergovernmental organizations, civil society organizations, parliamentarians, experts and the media.

37. *The Committee approved the provisional programme of the United Nations African Meeting on the Question of Palestine as contained in Working Paper No. 6.*

Other matters

38. **The Chair** announced that on 27 May 2010 the Division for Palestinian Rights had relaunched the website entitled "The Question of Palestine" after redesigning it.

The meeting rose at 12.45 p.m.